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RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 0942
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RUEHKG/AMEMBASSY KINGSTON 1958
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO 2423
RUEHBH/AMEMBASSY NASSAU 2656
RUEHSP/AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN 1611
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 0783
RUEHDG/AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO 0352
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STATE FOR WHA/CAR
DRL
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SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CAR
INR/IAA (BEN-YEHUDA)
TREASURY FOR JEFFREY LEVINE

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: HAITIAN ELECTIONS TECHNICALLY READY, BUT POLITICAL PROBLEMS REMAIN

¶1. Introduction: In a meeting with the donors and international elections partners February 1, Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) Director General gave a readout from the January 29 elections simulation. The simulation tested distribution of materials, the status of the Voting Centers (VC), and the Port-au-Prince based Vote Tabulation Center (VTC). Bernard said that in most cases, the simulation day went well, but that it also revealed some important problems that Bernard and the CEP are working to fix before February 7. End Introduction.

Some Voting Centers Refuse Non-Sensitive Materials

¶2. According to Bernard, some of the VC, mostly those in schools and churches, refused to receive non-sensitive elections materials. Bernard said he was not sure whether the sites refused the material because they did not understand that non-sensitive materials would arrive before Election Day or because they were refusing to act as a VC. However, he reported that a group at the CEP would work to fix the problem and that the Minister of Education wrote a letter to the schools asking for their cooperation. He expected the problems to be solved soon. According to USAID, as of February 3, roughly 20 possible VCs, including some state schools, still refuse to allow voting materials onto their premises. Bernard said he believes that the centers are either not cooperating for political reasons or to extort a last-minute payment from the CEP.

Last Voting Site (BV) Personnel Still Training

¶3. Bernard reported that the drawn out conflict between the political parties and CEP about poll worker lists continues, but said it would be settled by February 5. He lamented that many political party complaints were more about confusion within the parties and political machinations to delay the

process than real concerns about the poll worker lists. For example, MOCHRENHA complained that no one from its list of potential poll workers in one commune had been hired by the CEP, but when Bernard found MOCHRENHA's list, he discovered that the CEP had selected 17 of its 37 suggestions. (Some parties filed a formal complaint February 2 in the southeast, see septel.) Bernard admitted that the CEP had made some errors processing the lists, but stated that the CEP had done its best to fix the problem by sending the list with errors to the political parties for corrections and many political parties never responded with changes. As a result, he said some 50 percent of the poll worker training would occur February 2 and 3, and a very small number of trainings would continue February 4 and 5. However, according to USAID, the CEP is still struggling with political party complaints as of February 3.

¶4. At mega-centers in urban areas, Bernard said that Haitian Scouts and "Brigades de Jeunesse" would help voters to find their voting site. He said that BV employees and supervisors would train the youth and to mitigate confusion, each voting site would list the first and last name that it serves. Bernard was confident that though there would be some problems with the centers, Haitians want to vote in the election and would tolerate a fair amount of confusion in order to participate.

CEP Regional Employees Paid

¶5. UNDP Financial Officer Mohammed Hassan reported that all communal and departmental electoral bureau (BEC and BED) employees had been paid as of January 31. He said press

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reports to the contrary were either old or focusing on a very few isolated cases. Bernard said a working group was handling the issue at the CEP and would advise the BEC and BED workers to check their bank accounts for the transfers. He said the payment would enable him to call on the BEC and BED employees to help sort out any remaining elections issues in the days remaining before the first round February 7.

More Voting Center Changes

¶6. Bernard reported that the CEP had finished the final changes to the voting center list. The CEP has made 98 changes to the list in the last month. It has added annexes to expand the capacity of 44 VC, moved 50 VC so that they can be closer to population centers, and added 4 VC to better serve the population in some areas. Bernard admitted that in some isolated cases people would have to walk up to two hours to reach their voting center, but asserted such long walks would be rare. He also said that the Interim Government would allow public transportation and private carpools to within a few blocks of the voting centers.

Vote Tabulation Center Fully Functional

¶7. The vote tabulation center has now been tested several times and is 100 percent functional, the only work that remains is to finish receiving areas for the press, political parties, international community and observers. Bernard said that the CEP press center at the Montana Hotel would begin to publish results after 20 percent of the returns have been counted and said the first provisional CEP results would likely come out February 8.

Several Declarations set to Clarify Rules for Election Day

¶8. PM Latortue announced rules and regulation for election on the radio early February 3. The announcement included clarification that voters will be allowed to vote with their

registration receipt (Bernard also made the announcement February 3), that February 7 will be a national holiday, the sale of alcohol will be prohibited February 7, that demonstrations will be prohibited from February 5 until the publication of provisional results, and that the end of the campaign season will be February 5. Bernard reported that the Government would ask Electricity d,Haiti (EDH) to increase politically sensitive power production on election night to ease tension and aid in ballot counting.

Cite Soleil Voting Centers

¶9. Bernard reported that the new voting center locations for Cite Soleil have been finalized and would be posted at the old VC locations to help voters find the new centers. Bernard also revised the number of registered voters in Cite Soleil from 55,000 to 60,000, because some Cite Soleil residents had registered at the CEP, where anyone from any part of the country could register.

CEP Cash Flow Problem Solved

¶10. The CEP and UNDP have solved CEP cash flow problems by creating a revolving account for additional documented CEP expenses. (Note: The cash flow problem stemmed largely from poorly documented travel between March and October 2005 that was not reimbursed and unforeseen trips to sort out problems in the field since mid-December. End Note). According to

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UNDP financial officer Mohammed Hassan, the UNDP issued a check February 2 for roughly USD 300,000 to the CEP. Bernard stated February 1 that he intended to use the revolving fund to finance last minute travel to sort out problems before February 7. The UNDP and CEP said they would design a vouchering system so that the UNDP can easily reimburse legitimate CEP expenses in the future.

¶11. Comment: Bernard and the CEP still have time to sort out final wrinkles with the voting center and BV personnel. What problems remain are strictly non-technical but are worrisome with days until the election. MINUSTAH Electoral Taskforce Chief Colonel Barry MacLeod called the election a "boxer with a cauliflower ear", but said that technically the process has the momentum to continue and produce an acceptable result. End Comment.
CARNEY